

EXPLAINING THE CATEGORY OF THE CONVENTIONAL RELATIVE TO THE WORLD

As explained earlier (Handouts 3 & 16), the first chapter of Maitreya's *Ornament for Clear Realizations* covers ten topics the second of which, the *Mahayana Practice Instructions*, has ten subtopics. Of those ten subtopics the first one is the *Two Truths*.

The Ten Topics of the First Chapter of the <i>Ornament for Clear Realization</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bodhicitta 2. Mahayana Practice Instructions 3. The Path of Preparation 4. Buddha Nature 5. Objects of Focus 6. The Three Great Objectives 7. Armor-like Practice 8. Engaged Practice 9. Practice of Accumulation 10. Practice of Definite Emergence 	<div data-bbox="671 499 1490 893"> <p>The Ten Mahayana Practice Instructions (M.P.I.):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) M.P.I. on the <i>Two Truths</i> 2) M.P.I. on the <i>Four Noble Truths</i> 3) M.P.I. on the <i>Three Jewels</i> 4) M.P.I. on the <i>Diligence of Non-Involvement</i> 5) M.P.I. on the <i>Diligence of Tirelessness</i> 6) M.P.I. on the <i>Diligence of Thoroughly Upholding the Path</i> 7) M.P.I. on the <i>Five Visions</i> 8) M.P.I. on the <i>Six Clairvoyances</i> 9) M.P.I. on the <i>Path of Seeing</i> 10) M.P.I. on the <i>Path of Meditation</i> </div>

The *Ornament for Clear Realizations* is the main text that Tibetan monastic colleges rely on during the six years studies of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. As the main Indian commentary, *Clarifying the Meaning*, on the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* is by Haribhadra who is a proponent of the Svatantrika Madhyamika (the Middle Way Autonomy tenet), the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* and thus its subtopic, the *Two Truths*, are traditionally explained from the point of view of the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet.

After those six years follows the study of the *Madhyamika* (the Middle Way) which lasts for three years. The main text Tibetan monastic colleges rely on during that period is Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*. This text also covers the *Two Truths*. However, it does so more extensively than the previous text and from the point of view of the Prasangika Madhyamika (the Middle Way Consequence tenet).

Since this class' handouts on the *Two Truths* are mainly based on Lama Tsongkhapa's *Illumination of the Thought*, which is a commentary on Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*, they are predominantly from the point of view of the Prasangika Madhyamika tenet.

Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet:

However, in order to expound on the section **EXPLAINING THE CATEGORY OF THE CONVENTIONAL RELATIVE TO THE WORLD** it may be helpful to first look at the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet. This philosophical tenet asserts, similar to the Prasangika tenet, that phenomena are dependent on the mind in order to exist. In other words, phenomena exist because they appear to a non-defective mind and cannot exist without appearing to such a mind. A non-defective mind is a mind that is not mistaken with respect to its main object, i.e. it is a correct mind whose main object exists. Therefore, since phenomena cannot exist without relying on appearing to a non-defective mind they are asserted to not exist truly or ultimately. However, according to this tenet, phenomena nevertheless exist inherently, intrinsically and from their own side. If they did not exist inherently etc. they could not exist at all. Thus, the proponents of the Svatantrika tenet assert that even though phenomena are imputed by conceptual consciousness, they are not merely imputed, for there is something that is found when searching among the basis of imputation of those phenomena. Hence, this tenet claims to avoid the extreme of reification by asserting that all phenomena are empty of existing truly and the extreme of nihilism by asserting that all phenomena exist inherently and intrinsically.

Furthermore, according to the Savatantrika tenet, phenomena appear to sense and mental consciousnesses to exist inherently. However, since phenomena are inherently existent, awarenesses are not mistaken with respect to such appearance. Therefore, a conventional direct perceiver, such as an eye consciousness realizing a sprout is not mistaken regarding the sprout appearing to exist inherently.

Since, according to this tenet, the sprout does not appear to exist truly or ultimately to that eye consciousness, the eye consciousness is not mistaken with respect to its ultimate nature. Hence, all conventional direct perceivers are non-mistaken awarenesses regarding the ultimate nature of their main objects so that conventional truths do not have the same deceptive nature as ascribed to them by the proponents of the Prasangika tenet. (Please note that according to the Prasangika tenet, there is no difference between existing inherently and truly so that all awarenesses, except the direct perceivers that realize emptiness, are mistaken with respect to the ultimate nature of phenomena because their main objects always appear to exist inherently/truly. Thus, conventional truths are deceptive in a way in which when they appear to sentient beings' awarenesses there is always a discrepancy between the way they appear to exist inherently/truly and the way they actually exist.)

The two categories of conventional truth according to the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet:

Since the proponents of the Svatantrika do not assert conventional truths to be deceptive and false the way the Prasangikas do they assert that conventional truth can be divided into two:

(1) True/correct conventional truth

Tibetan: ཡང་དག་ཀྱན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པ། - *Yang dag Kuen dzob Den pa* (*Yang dag* = true/correct/ real/

genuine/right/perfect, *Kuen* = thoroughly/everything/all, *Dzob* = conceal/ obscure/hide, *Den pa* = truth/reality)

(2) Unreal/wrong conventional truth

Tibetan: ལོག་པའི་ཀྱན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པ། - *Log pa'i Kuen dzob Den pa* (*Log pa* = unreal/wrong/distorted/

erroneous/reverse, *Kuen* = thoroughly/everything/all, *Dzob* = conceal/ obscure/hide, *Den pa* = truth/reality)

This way of categorizing conventional truths is based on a statement from Jnanagarbha's *Distinguishing the Two Truths*:

*Since they are [respectively] able and unable
To perform functions as they appear
A division of real and unreal
Conventionalities is made.*

The meaning of a true/correct conventional truth

It is a conventional truth which from the perspective of ordinary beings' direct perceivers exists the way it appears.

For instance, a pot is a true conventional truth because from the perspective of an ordinary person's eye consciousness apprehending pot, the pot exists the way it appears. The reason for specifying "*ordinary beings'* direct perceivers" is to ensure that the meaning of true conventional truths also applies to the Yogic Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet. There are two Svatantrika Madhyamika tenets:

(1) Yogic Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet and

(2) Sutric Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet

According to the Yogic Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet, which is similar to the Cittamatra (Mind Only) tenet in that it does not assert external phenomena, all sense direct perceivers (e.g. an eye consciousness apprehending a pot) are mistaken because their main objects appear to exist externally but do not exist in that way. Therefore, according to this tenet an eye consciousness apprehending a pot is mistaken because the pot does not exist the way it *appears* to exist externally. However, ordinary beings are not aware of such mistaken appearance so that from the perspective of their eye consciousnesses the pot exists the way it appears.

According to the Sutric Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet, objects of sense consciousnesses (shape, sound, etc.) exist externally so that all direct perceivers apprehending true conventional truths are non-mistaken.

The meaning of an unreal/wrong conventional truth

It is a conventional truth which from the perspective of ordinary beings' direct perceivers does not exist the way it appears.

For instance mirror reflections, echoes, mirages of water, rainbows, dream-elephants, etc.

